'Life' Reporter Chandler Speaks Out On Jim Garrison, Organized Crime

In an exclusive interview with THE DRIFTWOOD, **Life Magazine** reporter David L. Chandler explained many of the difficulties he has encountered in Louisiana. Known mainly for his intensive investigation into organized crime in Louisiana and the subsequent articles in **Life,** Chandler was asked to comment on many of the situations he has observed and reported in Louisiana.

Although once a close personal friend with Orleans Parish D. A. Jim Garrison (Garrison was the best man in Chandler's w e d d i n g), they have been on opposite ends ever since the **Life** stories confirmed that organized crime e x i s t s. Garrison claims it does not exist, at least not in Orleans Parish, and h a s, in Chandler's words, tried to pin a perjury charge on the **Life** reporter in order to discredit the stories.

Driftwood: How do you go about digging up information, for instance for the stories on crime in Louisiana?

Chandler: First you pick up the gossip by talking to law enforcement officers and politicians and so on. Then you start researching legal records and find out where much of the property lies—in the case of the Mafia you can usually find a relationship between the Mafia people and somebody holding political office. Then you go and interview the politician and see what he says. Frequently you get a lot of it just out of these personal interviews.

Driftwood: What about the statements by the governor that all organized crime in Louisiana has h e e n completely cleaned up?

Chandler: Did he say that? You know he's made a number of statements to that effect. One was recently before the legislature that **Life Magazine** had told him that no state had a better record against gambling than Louisiana and I could never find anybody with **Life** who told him that. I certainly didn't.

We have a big problem trying to defend against these sorts of statements . . . about the only thing we can do is issue a formal announcement from New York.

Driftwood: If you had all this evidence about Mafia-controlled crime why didn't you appear before the grand jury and give them the information?

Chandler: I have appeared before three grand juries. It was the fourth one we tried to avoid because we had evidence to convince a federal court that it was all a set-up . . . that Garrison wanted me in there to manufacture some sort of perjury case and thus compromise the **Life** stories on crime in Louisiana.

Driftwood: What about the rumor that the Times-Picayune broke the story on the Kennedy investigation because they knew that Garrison was planning to sell out to "Life Magazine"?

Chandler: I can comment on the rumor. It was even mentioned in a **Picayune** editorial that he was supposed to sell out to **Life** for, I think, $50,000. I can say there were never any finances discussed between Garrison and **Life** and I was present at all the . . . let's call them preliminary negotiations . . . and money was never brought up.

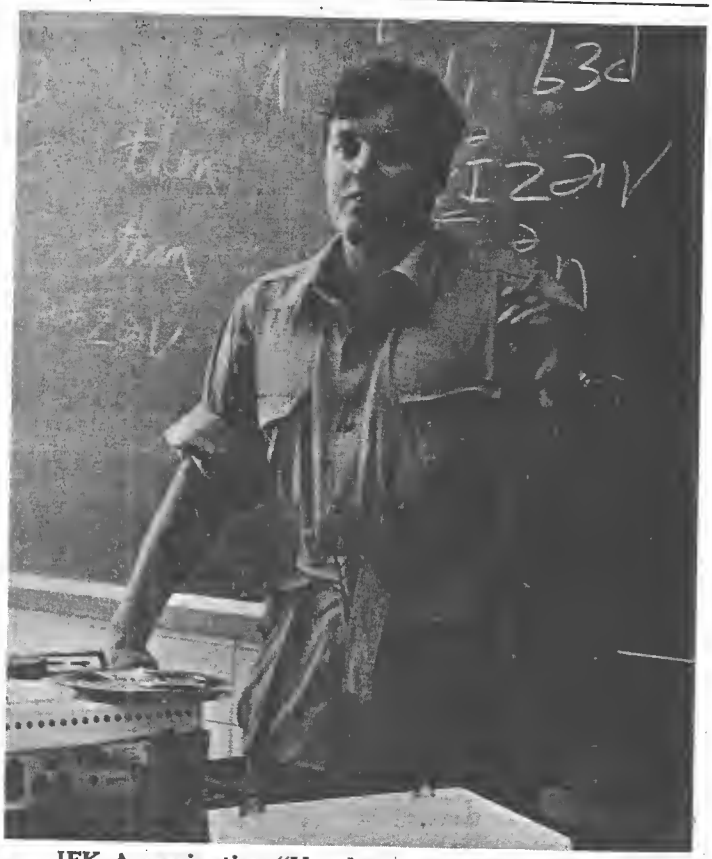
The agreement was that we would exchange information—**Life** has much vaster resources than Garrison does. We were to furnish him with information about somebody in Dallas and in exchange we were to have complete access to his files, which we didn't have.

Driftwood: Would you comment on the assassination of President Kennedy?

Chandler: I think it is an unsolved murder. What is making the Warren Report look better is time. As the years go by no one comes up with anything nearly as good.

Driftwood: Garrison claims that "Life Magazine" is suppressing information and thereby hindering his probe. Would you comment on this charge?

Chandler: Life has complied with the grand jury's subpoena



JFK Assassination "Unsolved Murder"—Chandler

and delivered the full copy of the Zapruder film to Garrison. It's a better copy than the Warren Commission received, because mechanically it was better copied.

The stipulation that this not be reproduced for the public was based on two things. First, it was a grand jury subpoena and evidence is supposed to be secret. Second, the film is the property of Life. They paid more than $50,000 for it and if you make a public copy this abridges copyright protection and every other agency could use it.

Garrison agreed to all this because—and this is the nut of the whole thing—his grand jury subpoena couldn't have been enforced because he would have to show a connection between Dallas and New Orleans, which he can't do. That's the only reason he went along with it. So Life Magazine, I think, was gracious in letting him have a copy of the film.

Driftwood: Do you think that Garrison is sincere in his investigation or is this some kind of cover-up to the fact that he is not doing anything about organized crime?

Chandler: I think he is sincere the way a mad-man is sincere. I have wondered whether the Mafia's connection is consistent from beginning throughout . . .whether he is pressuring the Mafia, by that I mean Carlos Marcello, to get his leads and information . . .or whether they are suddenly feeding it to him and in his madness he doesn't realize what is happening. I don't know, but all his early leads lean to the Mafia: David Ferry and Gordon Novel both worked for Marcello; Dean Andrews, the first man Garrison ever talked to about all this, was Marcello's immigration specialist until he (Marcello) got a better one; and it goes on and on. I don't know what the Mafia's true role in this assassination probe is. I think that Garri-

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son is sincere hut he's mad.

Driftwood: If this is what you feel about the probe then what about the arrest of Clay Shaw?

Chandler: I'm convinced that the Shaw arrest, from the details released on the day of the arrest, was illegal; that a numher of his rights were violated, that many of the Supreme Court rulings, particularly the Escobedo-Maranda Ruling were violated in the proceedings of that day of March the first. I think it is an illegal arrest and one without justification.

Driftwood: Was your friendship with Garrison real or do you think he was trying to use you in some way?

Chandler: Oh, our friendship was genuine. About a year after (1966) I became alarmed—I had not seen much of him hut I heard things from people on his staff that indicated he was slipping. I went to see him in September '66 and I thought it was quite ohvious that somewhere—I don't want to use a term . . . I'm no psychiatrist—he had gone beyond reality. He encountered no opposition to his opinions, weeded out anyhody from the staff who would offer arguments, and surrounded himself with "yes-men" and that's the way it is now.

There is a magazine, called the **New Orleans Magazine,** and I volunteered to do an article. I had no other way of reaching him (Garrison) and I felt mayhe I could shock him back to what he used to be hy a puhlic article, hut it didn't. It shocked him hut not back.

Editor's Note: Mr. Garrison has been offered equal space to present his side of the story. Thus far the district attorney has not responded.

Chandler Says Mafia Still Active In Louisiana Politics